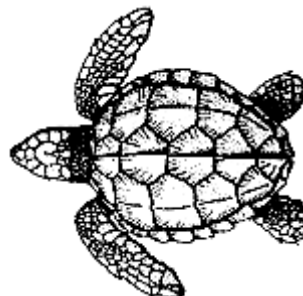


# **The Loggerhead**

## **Southeast Asia/Pacific Regional Environment and Health News**

**Q1: 2005**



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The Southeast Asia/Pacific REO home page:  
<http://bangkok.usembassy.gov/embassy/reo.htm>



Access to clean water is a permanent global challenge. The U.N. declared 2005 to 2015 the International Decade for Action, "Water for Life," starting World Water Day, March 22, 2005.

For more information: [www.unesco.org/water](http://www.unesco.org/water)

### **Tsunami Relief, Recovery and Reconstruction**

After the Indian Ocean tsunamis of December 26, 2004, the United States quickly joined the efforts to provide relief to affected area. In the initial emergency phase, U.S. military aircraft began flying search and rescue operations immediately following the tsunamis, and military personnel were on the ground in the region three days after the tsunami struck. More than 15,000 U.S. military personnel were involved in providing relief in the affected region as of January 12, supported by 25 ships and 94 aircraft, delivering about 2.2 million pounds of relief supplies to affected nations. On February 9, President Bush asked Congress to increase U.S. official assistance to a total of \$950 million. Additionally, U.S. private sector donations to the tsunami relief effort are estimated at over \$1 billion. On March 16, the U.S. military ended its tsunami relief efforts in the devastated Indonesian province of Aceh when the medical ship USNS Mercy departed to provide humanitarian assistance for the victims of an earthquake in Alor, East Nusa Tenggara province, eastern Indonesia. Overall, the U.S. military delivered more than 24 million pounds of relief supplies and equipment to the region since operations began.

As soon as recovery and reconstruction became possible, scientific teams from NOAA, USGS and other agencies began working with local counterparts to develop technical cooperation plans in the areas of geohazards, coastal recovery and community rebuilding. In Thailand, USAID plans to assist in the reconstruction of sustainable coastal communities, incorporating principles of disaster threat reduction and integrated coastal management. Ideally, this project will serve as a model for sustainable reconstruction projects throughout the region. In Indonesia, USAID reconstruction activities will focus on rehabilitating critical infrastructure in order to restore basic services (health, education), revitalize economic livelihoods, and foster the return of people to revived communities.

## **Plans for Regional Early Warning System Underway**

On March 8, at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris, participants at the "International Coordination Meeting for the Development of a Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System for the Indian Ocean Within a Global Framework" adopted a communiqué outlining the arrangements for the establishment of an early warning system for the Indian Ocean region. This meeting builds upon the work begun at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, held January 18-22 in Kobe, Japan, and continued at the Phuket Ministerial Meeting on Regional Cooperation on Tsunami Early Warning Arrangements, held January 28-29.

The meeting welcomed an offer from the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center, the only such regional body in the world, and the Japan Meteorological Agency to provide interim tsunami advisory information to authorized contacts in the Indian Ocean countries, once they are designated (by April 1), pending the establishment of a full-fledged system which UN officials hope to have up and running by June 2006. Technicians will set up tidal gauges at six sites in the eastern Indian Ocean, mainly near Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia, and upgrade 15 existing gauge sites elsewhere in the region by November 2005 to complete a rudimentary alert system. The final stage, which is expected to be operational by the end of 2006, will involve a regional warning center and a network of seabed sensors and gauges, which in turn will alert 26 national tsunami warning centers.

## **New Wave of Avian Influenza Cases**

In December 2003, the sudden death of chickens at a farm near Seoul prompted suspicion of an epidemic of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI). 19,000 out of 24,000 chickens on the farm died of the H5N1 strain of HPAI the week of December 5-11. The remaining 5,000 were culled. By the end of the month, more than a million chickens and ducks in Korea had died of the disease or by culling. By the end of the next month, outbreaks of HPAI among humans were confirmed in Vietnam and Thailand, and among poultry in Cambodia, China, Hong Kong, Japan, Thailand, and Vietnam. By the end of this initial wave, in March 2004, HPAI outbreaks were also detected in Indonesia, Laos, Pakistan and Taiwan, and 24 human deaths were confirmed. More human cases were confirmed between August and October, and a new wave began in December. Cumulatively, 46 deaths occurred from 69 confirmed human cases of avian influenza in Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam since January 2004. Hundreds of millions of birds, wild and domestic, have been killed by the disease or by culling.

Public health experts are concerned that the HPAI virus, which appears to be endemic in Southeast Asia, will mutate or reassort with a human influenza virus to allow efficient human-to-human transmission of a new virus for which humans have no immunity. If this new virus were to maintain a high mortality rate, researchers fear a pandemic like the "Spanish Flu" of 1918-19, which caused many times the fatalities of World War I. Although clusters of human cases have been detected in Southeast Asia, researchers have not confirmed any such efficient human transmission of H5N1. For more information, visit the CDC and WHO websites.

## **Decision Time for Lao Dam**

The World Bank will soon consider whether to provide \$100 million in partial risk guarantees to lower the risk profile and support the financing of the \$1.2 billion Nam Theun II hydroelectric power project in the Lao PDR. The appraisal process of the project's extensive preparatory work began in January and is now successfully complete. Appraisers found that the project plans meet the Bank's "Decision Framework" requirements for submission to the board of directors:

- It is embedded in a development framework aimed at poverty reduction and environmental conservation;
- It is technically, financially, managerially and economically sound and adheres to the Bank's environmental and social safeguard policies;

- It has greater understanding and wider support within the international donor community and civil society.

Following the negotiation of required legal agreements in Lao PDR, the World Bank Group submitted the project documents for review by the Board of Executive Directors of the International Development Association (IDA) and the Board of Directors of the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA). After two decades of planning, the project may finally get the green light.

Laos has long suffered from poverty and lack of development, remaining an agrarian society dependent upon foreign aid. In the area affected by the project, the Nakai Plateau, 80% of family farms cannot grow enough rice for the year. With World Bank oversight, the Nam Theun II dam would provide Laos with a steady and transparent revenue stream from its abundant hydroelectric power potential, one of the nation's few options for hard currency. Social, economic, environmental, infrastructure and compensation programs will all flow from the dam's income, and the World Bank has gone to extreme lengths to ensure that all aspects of the project have proper planning and oversight. The dam's hydroelectric plant would provide clean power to a guaranteed and growing market in neighboring Thailand. Stay tuned for the final decision.

### **NGO Spotlight: Mercy Corps**

Headquartered in the United States and Scotland, Mercy Corps is an international family of humanitarian agencies that reaches more than six million people each year. Since 1979, Mercy Corps has provided over \$830 million in assistance to people in 80 nations. The organization's worldwide staff of 2000 currently reaches 6 million people in more than 35 countries. More than 91% of the agency's resources are allocated to programs that directly assist those in need.

What does Mercy Corps do?

We provide emergency relief services that assist people afflicted by conflict or disaster.

We develop sustainable communities that meet the needs of children and families. Our integrated strategies include agriculture, economic development, health, housing and infrastructure and strengthening local organizations.

We promote civil society initiatives in all our programs to encourage citizen participation, accountability, nonviolent conflict management, and the rule of law.

Over 150 Mercy Corps staff members continue to assist survivors of the Indian Ocean tsunami. Throughout the devastated region, the organization's efforts are reaching more than 250,000 people. Mercy Corps is also working with local organizations and communities to ensure long-term aid and economic recovery for families who have lost everything.

### **Upcoming Events**

- Second International Coordination Meeting for the Development of an Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning System, Port Louis, Mauritius, April 14-16
- UNESCAP 61st Commission Session, Bangkok, May 12-18, [unescap.org/61/index.asp](http://unescap.org/61/index.asp)
- 22nd Int'l Tsunami Symposium, Crete, June 27-29 [www.gein.noa.gr/English/tsunamis.htm](http://www.gein.noa.gr/English/tsunamis.htm)
- 15th World Conference on Disaster Management, Toronto, July 10-13 [www.wcdm.org](http://www.wcdm.org)

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